

Corporate America's profits were higher than ever.

Perhaps no sector has evoked more frustration and anger from the American people as the largest oil and gas companies and the prices they are charging.

Last year, the top 25 oil and gas companies reported \$205 billion in profits. Where has that money gone? To help American consumers? No way. To ease our energy troubles? Not at all.

According to one news source yesterday, 28 of the largest oil and gas companies gave out \$394 million in CEO compensation. And in the fourth quarter last year, stock buybacks among these companies rose by more than 2,000 percent—2,000 percent.

All this extra money they are making they put in the pockets of the CEOs and the wealthy shareholders who dominate in the oil company ownership. Just think about that. Americans are paying more and more at the pump and struggling to afford the basics, and oil companies, which are seeing their highest profits in years, prefer to reward executives and shareholders through corporate buybacks instead of American families.

Once we have an FTC with full membership, they will finally have the will, the means, and the power to look under the hood of America's energy sector and shine a much needed light on why Big Oil is pumping out record profits, even as consumers struggle.

So completing the membership of the FTC will be a priority, and we will work to finish the confirmation process of Mr. Bedoya as soon as we can.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, on Ukraine, later this week, President Biden is expected to send Congress another request for emergency funding to support the people of Ukraine in their fight against Russian aggression.

When the President makes his request, the Senate should be ready to work quickly to approve this funding. Every penny of American aid has been money well spent.

This fight, in a real sense, is about tyranny versus democracy itself. It is a Manichaean struggle.

It has been 2 months since Vladimir Putin began his immoral and savage war against the Ukrainian people. You see the pictures; it breaks your heart. It breaks your heart; savagery—savagery—of Mr. Putin killing women and children, innocent people.

So far, though, things have gone disastrously for Russian troops as hopes for a quick invasion have been all but dashed. The Ukrainian people, forced into a war not of their choosing and having suffered losses of inhumane proportions, have given Putin a much tougher fight than he ever bargained for, than he ever imagined. Out-numbered and out-equipped, the bravery and valiance of the Ukrainian people remain unbroken. Putin, meanwhile, is increasingly the most isolated leader in the world. Although, par-

enthetically, shame on the world leaders who are playing footsie with him, including China.

But the Ukrainian people still need our help. Sadly, this fight seems far from over, and losses from the Ukrainian people have been severe.

The United States has a moral obligation to help the Ukrainian people with the tools they need for as long as they need them. Again, this is about tyranny versus democracy itself.

In which direction will the world turn in this, the 21st century?

Once the President makes his request to Congress, approving additional aid for Ukraine will be a must. I expect both sides to work with swift, bipartisan cooperation to get it done.

I also expect the Senate to move quickly on the nomination of President Biden's choice for our Ambassador to Ukraine, Bridget Brink. Ms. Brink's nomination is terrific news that comes at a critical moment. She is deeply experienced. She has already won bipartisan support in this Chamber and is very much needed as the United States seeks to strengthen our diplomatic ties to the war-torn nation. Ms. Brink's nomination will be a top priority of the Senate once she comes before the Chamber.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, on COVID relief: finally, there is another issue in which Republicans must work with Democrats—passing another round of COVID relief.

COVID funding is not a matter of “nice to have if we can afford it.” COVID funding is a must-have. It is something our Nation cannot possibly afford to go without.

Yesterday, the White House made clear that other countries like Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam are already in front of us when it comes to purchasing new vaccines and treatments. American companies, with their ingenuity, come up with these vaccines and treatment; but because we are unwilling—our Republican colleagues so far have blocked financing this—other countries are going to buy from us.

We don't want to be in a position in the fall where we desperately need these medicines but our companies have signed contracts with other countries—other countries. That would be a huge mistake.

Given our Federal budget, it is a small amount to ask that we provide money for these therapeutics so that we can have them for our country, for our folks, as much as the rest of the world may need them, so that we have vaccines—the best vaccines—developed and ready to go and so we have enough testing and treatment.

But other countries are beating America to the punch because Republicans have blocked the Senate from approving new funding. The answer to avoiding another shutdown of our communities is very simple: Senate Republicans should work with us to quickly pass another round of COVID funding. It is not more complicated than that.

Let me say it again. If we want to keep life as close to normal down the line, if we want to keep schools and churches and businesses open if, God forbid, another aggressive variant arises, Republicans should work with us to approve more money for vaccines, testing, and lifesaving therapeutics.

The longer that Senate Republicans hold out on working with us to approve new funding, the higher the cost will be for our country down the line. And when we don't get back to normal, we can't stay at normal because of a new variant, people will know what happened.

God forbid that happens. We don't want it to happen. We want them to work with us; but, unfortunately, so far, we are not seeing that cooperation. From some we have, I must be clear. I had good discussions with several of our Republicans, but then it was blocked by the Republican leadership.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the Biden administration's bad decisions have brought many crises upon our country. One of the worst is the collapse of law and order on our southern border.

Last month, Customs and Border Protection reported over 221,000 apprehensions. That is up 33 percent just since February. It is the highest monthly total in 22 years. We have already hit more than 1 million encounters in just the first half of this fiscal year. But, alas, this could still be just the beginning. The Department of Homeland Security is bracing for an even bigger surge in the weeks and months to come. Authorities are steeling for the possibility that we could see 18,000 new people showing up every single day.

In 2020, President-elect Biden said that “end[ing] up with two million people on our border” would be “the last thing we need,” but his own policies went on to produce exactly that outcome.

In 2021, on President Biden's watch, 2 million people from at least—listen to this—160 different countries were stopped along our southern border, and now immigration officials are anticipating totals that could more than triple—triple—last year's record.

Against this backdrop, with illegal immigrants and deadly fentanyl pouring into our country, any administration living in reality would be working overtime to actually secure the border. Instead, even now, President Biden is trying to throw away what little security still exists.

For 2 years, since the start of the pandemic, a legal authority called title 42 has empowered the government to simply turn around a large share of the people they catch and send them right back where they came from. Every